2024 HILT Conference: "Open Minds in Dialogue"

Friday, September 20, 2024, at Harvard Graduate School of Education

The thirteenth annual HILT Conference, "Open Minds in Dialogue," underscored the importance of integrating emotional and analytical skills in teaching, navigating the complexities of speech-related pressures, and fostering inclusive environments for open dialogue. Key discussions revolved around how educators can balance personal narratives with academic rigor, the dynamics of speech-related pressures, and the of role faculty in creating neutral and trustworthy classroom environments. The following insights from the event are meant for educators and institutions aiming to enhance academic and professional development through effective communication and inclusive practices.

Key Takeaways from Breakout Sessions

Leveraging Technologies to Give Everyone a Voice

Session Description: This session will demonstrate various technological tools that instructors have utilized to enable constructive conversation around challenging topics in their courses. Many of the examples will showcase when anonymity can be used as an effective lever for tempering conversation. Through practical demonstrations and real-world examples, the session will highlight how technology can be a powerful enabler in giving voice to diverse perspectives, particularly those from marginalized or underrepresented groups. Participants will learn how to leverage these tools to create a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

- **Use of Technology for Inclusivity**: Technologies like live polling tools (e.g., Poll Everywhere) and social annotation platforms (e.g., Perusal) enable all students to participate and voice their perspectives anonymously or pseudonymously. This helps create an inclusive environment, reducing the fear of reputational harm and enabling students who might otherwise be hesitant to share their thoughts.
- **Importance of Safe and Trusting Environments**: Building a safe, trusting classroom environment is crucial for students to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. This can be reinforced through classroom norms and compacts, trust-building activities, and tools like threaded discussion forums that allow for pseudonymous participation.
- **Multiple Modes of Engagement**: Different technologies cater to various learning styles and preferences. For instance, social annotation platforms like Perusal support text readings, videos, and podcasts, and allow students to interact asynchronously, making it possible for all types of learners to engage in ways that suit them best.
- **Awareness and Management of Classroom Dynamics**: Tools like Teachly provide real-time data on classroom participation, allowing instructors to identify and address disparities in student

engagement based on demographics or participatory behaviors. This ensures that voices from different backgrounds are equally heard and valued.

- **Practical Applications and Challenges**: Practical applications of these technologies include using them to discuss sensitive or divisive topics with less fear of negative repercussions. However, it's also essential to have systems in place (like content moderation and community guidelines) to manage potential challenges such as inappropriate comments or misuse of anonymity.